
Summary Minutes: AWERB STANDING AGENDA ITEMS meeting

Status: Chair approved

Meeting held: 26 April 2023 at 10am via MS Teams

Present:

13 plus 1 in attendance, 1 by invitation and 15 apologies

1 CONTROL OF PESTS ON CAMPUS

The Campus Services Manager was welcomed to the meeting. She had been invited to give an update on the pest control methods used by the RVC as AWERB wanted to ensure that the methods used to capture and euthanise pests and vermin were carried out in an ethical way.

It was explained that the RVC had a contract with a pest control company that covered the following:

- Bait boxes: checked on a monthly basis for any activity. If activity the area would be appropriately baited.
- Pigeon trapping: pigeons were a big problem at the student pavilions. This was managed through pigeon trapping, carried out via a 6 weekly routine. Humane trapping cages are placed on the pavilion roofs. An operative comes in every day for 6 weeks to remove any pigeons caught, that are then humanely culled. Whilst in the cages, the pigeons are provided with food and water. After a four week break, the process is repeated. This had reduced the number of pigeons by over half.

Netting had also been placed on top of some of the pavilions to act as a deterrent, but there had not been enough money to net all the pavilions. A request had been included in this year's budget for funding to be able to net the remaining pavilions. Being able to cover the roofs with nets would mean it should no longer be necessary to trap the pigeons. AWERB were supportive of this investment as it would be better from an animal welfare perspective.

- Call outs: for anything that was not covered by the contract, then it was possible to arrange for call outs, for example to handle wasp nests.
- It was noted that not all of the RVC used the same pest control company, which could be problematic, as the other company did not provide the same level of coverage. A discussion to be held to see whether it was possible to harmonise the pest control contracts between the different areas of RVC.

The following queries were raised:

Pigeon trapping:

- **What happened to pigeons that were trapped that had a ring on its leg?**
These would be released.
- **Was it possible to trap a pigeon and then release it elsewhere?**
No, as they would just then return to where they were trapped.
- **What methods were used to humanely kill the animals? What training did the operatives receive?**
This would be checked.

Rabbits:

- **Who was responsible for controlling the rabbit population? Was this within the pest control company's remit?**
This would be a call out (so additional to the contract).
- **There was a big problem with rabbits having caused significant damage within the BSU fields, so were not usable by horses or other stock (except sheep).**
A discussion would be held to see what options there were for controlling the rabbit population and whether it could be added to the pest control company's contract.

2 AWERB MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Several AWERB membership changes were reported. Thanks were expressed to those stepping down for their contributions to AWERB.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 April 2023 were confirmed as an accurate record.

4 ACTION LOG

4.1 Item 7.1: Pig Barn at Boltons Park Farm (22 February 2023 meeting)

Pig barn roof had now been fixed.

4.2 Item 1 AWERB to have access to the ISO 10993 regulatory guidelines (8 February 2023 meeting)

ISO had been contacted who had advised that the costs were CHF 2309 for 14 simultaneous users in 1 location to access the guidelines. It had been decided that this was too expensive an option.

4.3 Item 3.2.2: Interim review of PPLs (11 January 2023 meeting)

It was confirmed that to formalise the informal reviews of project licences that had previously happened. The plan was for NACWOs to meet together to discuss study requests and project progressions, particularly with clients who were doing routine big studies, in order to review numbers, severity and how it was going.

4.4 Item 3.2.2: PPL Holder Workshop (11 January 2023 meeting)

This was in the process of being written.

4.5 Item 3.2.4: 3Rs awareness and 3Rs local culture (11 January 2023 meeting)

Various discussions have been held. Options suggested included holding a poster competition with prizes.

4.6 Item 3.2.7: Talks on DMD dogs with QMH staff (11 January 2023 meeting)

Talk had been arranged. It would also include A(SP)A, the Home Office and other work that was done within the Unit.

4.7 Item 4.1: Gathering costing information for purchasing cryopreservation equipment (22 February 2023 meeting)

There was a MRC course coming up on cryopreservation and techniques, that it was hoped to send a member of staff to.

4.8 Item 4.2: Group Composition (22 February 2023 meeting)

3 new members have joined AWERB as Animal Welfare Science and Ethics representatives.

4.9 Item 4.11: Mid Term report (22 February 2023 meeting)

Useful meeting had been held with the project licence holder to go through the report, which had now been revised and passed back for comment.

4.10 Item 4.3: BSU Virtual Tour storyboard (22 February 2023 meeting)

The paper had been discussed at a senior management meeting. They had requested some additional information which was being put together.

4.11 Item 4.10: AWERB Budget/Training courses (22 February 2023 meeting)

The RSPCA had guidance documents on providing induction and training to AWERB members. In particular, they recommended a proper induction plan for new members. This was an area that the AWERB Chair had been working on with the recent new members including:

- Having an initial introductory interview with new members explaining what AWERB is; how they function
- Inviting potential new members to attend AWERBs as observers
- Having follow up meetings with the new members to go through reviewing PPLs and obtaining feedback on how they had found the process so far.

In conjunction with this, a formal induction booklet for new AWERB members was being put together, which was based on the RSPCA guidance documents. It was suggested that as part of this a new folder should be set up, where all the induction materials were kept. It would also be possible to record the presentations given and to store them there for new members to watch. It was agreed that a combination of materials being provided online as well as having individual catch ups was best. Having catch up meetings provided opportunities for the new AWERB members to ask questions in a smaller group and the meetings to date had generated very interesting discussions. It was also an opportunity to really welcome the new members and make sure they were settled in as joining a new committee could be daunting.

5 REVIEWING OF RESEARCH POLICIES

5.1 Culture of Care

A couple of papers in relation to culture of care had been circulated. In the interim there had been separate discussions to determine how best to support the teams. One of the papers had a copy of a questionnaire used by another organisation which could be revised and used to gauge the teams' views on how they felt the RVC dealt with animal welfare issues and whether they felt supported in their work in this area. The plan was to initially circulate to the technicians but it could possibly be circulated more widely to researchers involved in animal research. It was noted that a copy of the questionnaire would need to be submitted for ethical review to get formal approval to use the questionnaire.

A Working Group/Task Force would also be set up but there were a lot of avenues that needed to be considered as culture of care was a very big area including mentoring, supervision and counselling. It was important to consider who should be brought in for each area.

6 3RS

6.1 NC3Rs PhD studentships

The deadline for outline submissions had been extended to 10 May 2023.

6.2 Workshop: Refining the use of fluid control in rodents – 16th May, 10am to 1pm

This workshop was aimed at researchers who were either using or thinking of using fluid (or food) restriction in rodents as a motivational tool. It was particularly tailored for the rodent community but might be of benefit to the ferret community too.

6.3 Pan-London 3Rs Symposium

There had been 2 excellent posters from the RVC at the recent Pan-London 3Rs Symposium:

6.4 External report on the role of review and regulatory approvals processes for animal research in supporting implementation of the 3Rs:

A copy of this report had been circulated. It was suggested that it would be useful at the standing agenda items meetings, that one question from the report should be selected for discussion further.

7 NVS REPORT – CAMDEN

7.1 DDY MICE

- These mice have a short life expectancy (approximately 6 months). One though had recently died earlier than had been expected (16 weeks). There have been discussions about amending the project licence to reflect that there could be earlier mortality. A condition 18 report was submitted to the Home Office.
- DDY mice were prone to fighting. Measures have been taken though to try and limit this including cleaning the cages less often. This did seem to have helped.
- Skin conditions: some of the mice that have been received from an external supplier have been affected with a skin condition. A sample was sent off for testing and came back positive for ectoparasites. Historically, it was known that sometimes these tests could result in a false positive. Further testing had been carried out, however as the condition seemed to be clearing up using Isaderm cream, this indicated that it might not be ectoparasites. The facilities have been cleaned and screened and they were awaiting the results.

When the next batch of mice from the external Lab arrived they would be tested to make sure there were no signs of parasites.

7.2 Ferrets

- Two ferrets have recently died unexpectedly: one ferret was found dead in the morning, following surgery that had taken place the previous day. The likely cause of death was a bleed under one of the implants. Another ferret had to be euthanised post-operatively. A full review of surgical cases was done which identified some refinements that could be made to support animals before and during surgery: refining the anaesthesia analgesic and the storage provided. There would also be increased monitoring post-operatively including a formal NACWO assessment. There have been a further two surgeries which went well.

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- New Ferrets: two new lots of ferrets have arrived. Great care was needed with introducing them to the existing colony in order to try and avoid infection and contamination. They were being introduced very, very slowly and so far, no problems had been encountered.

7.3 Guinea Pigs

There were some guinea pigs that were used for teaching animal handling. Two of the males though had started fighting so have had to be separated. They would be rehomed.

7.4 Zebrafish

The system was showing a high score for ammonia. The filter had been cleaned out to see if that made any improvements. It was not affecting the wellbeing of the fish.

8 NVS REPORT – HAWKSHEAD

8.1 Dog Unit

- The technicians have had to cope with a lot of pressure and workload, which they have handled magnificently, though the situation had been hugely stressful to them.
- There were still problems with the local water source, so bottled water was having to be brought in manually for the dogs to be able to drink/eat food.
- Two of the dogs had developed Coccidia and Giardia (which has been prevalent in the Unit for some time now). During the treatment and clinical signs phase, the dogs were restricted to being housed in one kennel and given enrichment. The dogs have had to be monitored 24 hours a day though as they were trying to mess with the individual fittings in the kennel. These were being looked at to see what changes could be made to them. A rolling process of rebuilding/repairing the kennels was being implemented.
- Leak: there had been a leak in the ceiling room above the whelping room. This had now been repaired.

8.2 Animal Welfare Barn

- Leaking Roofs: there had been leaking roofs in the animal welfare barn into rooms containing frogs and chickens. This had now been repaired.

8.3 Estates issues

- Weekly meetings: following a series of issues it had now been agreed that there should be weekly meetings between Estates and BSU until the issues had been resolved. Numerous discussions and actions were being put in place to ensure that there was an effective, efficient maintenance programme in place.

8.4 Pigs

- Several pigs have developed cellulitis within their legs and then their abdomens. The pigs had been provided by the usual supplier and this had not happened before. The supplier had been contacted to see if any potential underlying cause could be identified. The remaining pigs were being monitored but had not shown any clinical signs of problems. There was no reason to believe that it was an infectious agent within the unit.

9 NACWO REPORT – CAMDEN

- Ectoparasites: following the positive tests for Ectoparasites in the mice, they had reacted very quickly in isolating the room. They were also looking at several different areas such as filtration to see if there was a source of contamination. Staff on the ground were also wearing disposable coats and sleeves.

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- BMS System: routine readings were being taken as a couple of rooms were slightly out of range. This was being covered within the routine meetings with Estates.

10 NTCO REPORTS:

10.1 Schedule 1 register review

During the Home Office facilities review at Hawkshead in October 2022, one of the Home Office Inspector recommendations was that the register should be amended to specify the completion method. The register was therefore in the process of being revised. The final version would be reviewed at the June 2023 meeting.

10.2 Assessors list

This was in the process of being reviewed as currently there were differences in how Camden and Hawkshead worked and determining what information was needed.

11 FEEDBACK FROM PPL HOLDERS THAT HAVE ATTENDED AWERB

AWERB noted the positive feedback report that had been received from one of the PPL Holders who had attend the AWERB meeting in April, in particular how supported she had felt.

12 PROJECT LICENCES AMENDED BY THE HOME OFFICE

AWERB noted that the Home Office had approved the amendment of three project licences since the previous meeting: two with primary availability at the RVC and one with secondary availability.

13 AMENDMENT TO ESTABLISHMENT LICENCE

AWERB noted that an amendment had been made to the Establishment Licence.

14 STUDY REQUESTS APPROVED SINCE 16 FEBRUARY 2023

AWERB noted that three study requests had been approved since the previous AWERB meeting.

15 END OF PPL REPORTS

An end of PPL report had been received and reviewed. No issues had been identified.

16 AWERB TERMS OF REFERENCE REVIEW

AWERB reviewed a sub section of the Terms of Reference (ensuring that the planned work was ethically justified and within the law according to set out directives) and confirmed that no changes were needed.

17 CONDITION 18 REPORTS

AWERB noted the condition 18 reports that had been submitted to the Home Office.

18 FOI REQUESTS

AWERB noted that one FOI response had been responded to since the previous meeting. A follow on request had then been received that had also been responded to.

19 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

19.1 FELASA RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE REHOMING OF ANIMALS

It was reported that FELASA had recently published their recommendations for the rehoming of animals used for scientific and educational purposes. This would be circulated and added to a future AWERB agenda to be reviewed, to see if any of FELASA's recommendations could be implemented.

19.2 Two new Project Licence applications approved

It was noted that two new project licence applications had been very recently approved by the Home Office and for both the Inspector had commented on how well written the licences had been, which was pleasing to see.

20 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

This was scheduled for 17 May 2023 and would be a PPL review meeting. [Secretary note: meeting subsequently cancelled].

Secretary
15 May 2023